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**Revisiting Community Assemblages:
Leamington's Response to
Neoliberal Globalization**

by

Karina Schneider

A Thesis

**Submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies
through Sociology and Anthropology
in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for
the Degree of Master of Arts at the
University of Windsor**

Windsor, Ontario, Canada

2009

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Abstract

The following is an analysis of shifting economic assemblages in communities and their creative responses to neoliberal globalization. This research suggests that perceived traditional forces of globalization, such as multinational corporations, may be in retreat from shaping community affairs. Instead, neoliberal globalization opens new avenues of global enterprise for smaller players and brings to light imaginative alternatives in community assemblages. The current literature has little to offer for tracing the reassemblage of communities. The case study examines the small community of Leamington in South-Western Ontario, Canada, and its changing relationship with the local H. J. Heinz production facility. It is based on interviews and web-site and newspaper research.

Keywords: neoliberal globalization, shifting assemblages, communities

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1. Introduction

Since the late 1980s, the concept of *globalization* has attracted the attention of social scientists. Robertson (1992) records that the term had hardly been used before this time. Indeed, globalization studies are by now considered an “addition of another level of analysis” (Lewellen 2002: 33). It could also be argued that the analysis of global structures is a logical outcome emanating from the profound changes in the late 1980s and early 1990s. The fall of the Berlin wall ended the Cold War. This caused many previously impermeable boundaries to disappear and flows of people, merchandise, capital and so forth to become free (or less hindered). This time period also saw the development of new technologies for the transmission and storing of information (mainly, of course, the internet, but also the availability of the personal computer and the introduction of mobile phones). The world became interconnected in a very short period of time.

This opening-up of spaces entails significant changes to every place on this planet. But the conditions we face today are rooted in the past. In the past century, anthropologists and other social scientists have mainly concerned themselves with so-called Third World countries.¹² The rationale for this was the tremendous impact of a rearrangement of African, Latin American, and some Asian areas during and after

¹Generally speaking, *Third World* is a difficult concept. I acknowledge that there is much debate about the application of this term. However, for this argument I follow other authors in their usage and meaning of *Third World*, see, for example, Escobar (1995), Shiva (2000, 2002) or Lowenhaupt Tsing (2005).

²Research in such areas is, of course, of great importance because these areas are undergoing the most drastic changes, as many scholars have brought to our attention. Among them are Gupta (1998), Shiva (2000, 2002) or Lowenhaupt Tsing (2005).

decolonialization. With decolonization came the rise of studies in *ethnicity* (Eriksen and Nielsen 2001: 126-8). New political boundaries were drawn often without consideration to the ethnic constellations in a particular region, providing the foundation of systemic and intrinsic difficulties in many post-colonial countries (see, for example, Gardner and Lewis 1996, Porter and Sheppard 1998, or Brower 1999). The second half of the twentieth century consequently saw the application of various strategies to change, especially, economic ones in these areas. Probably the most infamous are based on the *modernization* framework, including structural adjustment programs, aimed at the implementation of core strategies of neoliberal policies, such as export-led growth, privatization and a liberalization of markets. Such programs were facilitated by (at least technically) supranational institutions like the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank.³ With the end of the Cold War, barriers disappeared practically over night, creating new conditions and problems for the whole world, not only the Third World. The traditional attributes of neoliberalism could now unfold in full force, leading to the current period of *neoliberal globalization*.

I provide this very brief history of social research because it indicates that the current analysis of place, space, culture or economics (or a combination thereof) can only be meaningful if a comprehensive, or even *holistic*, approach is considered. With this, I mean that there is a need to know about past conditions before understanding and analyzing the implications of the changes that occur in the present (see, for example, Lewellen 2002). With regards to this research, one can also think of such

³I am not concerned at this point with the critics of the modernization theory, e. g., the supporters of the dependency theory.

transformations as a change in governing patterns or a shift in *assemblages*. I define *assemblage* as a collage of unrelated or fragmentary objects, composed and formed into a rectified whole. "It is the product of multiple determinations that are not reducible into a single logic" (Ong and Collier 2005: 12). Assemblages are constantly re-negotiated and re-assembled. In Leamington's case, this re-assembly of the economic base is a direct consequence to the changed conditions in an era of neoliberal globalization which is especially characterized by free trade and unhindered flows of capital. This process opened niches for local players and allowed for the quick rise of the greenhouse industry.

But it is not only a shift in assemblage in terms of economic players and the way a community is governed that is important. That is, it is only a shift in power away from the traditional pattern of assemblage. It is also a shift in the understanding of *global* and *local*. Dirlik (2001) formulates it like this: "The global, in other words, appears as the local, while the local in terms of networks appears as the global" (27). This can be interpreted as a change of functional location or a modification in assemblage. Small, local players can indeed be imagined to be the ultimate face of globalization in a community.⁴ This shift represents a switch in places: the multinational corporation is global but not encountered as the local anymore in terms of governing the local. And, vice versa, the local players⁵ are operating globally while adopting roles of governance in the local sphere. Appadurai (2001: 16) uses the terms *grassroots globalization* or a

⁴I see this in the light of Anderson's 'Imagined Communities' (1983) as a re-imagination of Leamington, an invention of a new Leamington that previously did not exist (6).

⁵What is meant here are economic as well as municipal entities.

globalization from below.

The mechanism fueling this shift in assemblage is very complex and opaque. Following Bauman (2000), these mechanisms can best be characterized as being one of flow. As Appadurai (2001) describes it, it has become “apparent by now that we live in a world surrounded by objects in motion” (5). Although, assemblages were in motion before the 1990s, it must be emphasized that the scale and the speed of the current shifts are unsurpassed by anything in the recent history. This becomes very evident in Leamington. Fast changing global conditions are altering the situation in the community. The established assemblage becomes increasingly inappropriate to deal with such conditions and the community is reconsidering its options. The changed circumstances open new avenues for the town and the community considers alternative routes in economic development - essentially transforming its assemblage into a new and more flexible formation.

This thesis contributes to an understanding of the changing conditions communities are facing in times of neoliberal globalization. As indicated earlier, a large number of studies about the impact of neoliberal globalization have been done on areas with much more severe consequences. However, it is not the degree of severity (which is probably not even possible to measure) that is of importance. Of concern are the responses of those involved in a particular region. Illuminating the history, the economic conditions, the governing entities, and the mechanisms of decision-making helps to put these flows on the map.

The main actors making up and reassembling this assemblage are the municipality of Leamington (the economic development office in particular), the H. J.

Heinz corporation, and those involved in the highly specialized field of agriculture, mainly the greenhouse industry. Leamington is a small town in South-Western Ontario on the shores of Lake Erie, near Point Pelee National Park on the most Southern tip of mainland Canada. Its geographic position allows for a mild climate, which promotes especially the cultivation of tomatoes. Since Heinz took up production a hundred years ago, mainly producing ketchup, the town promotes itself as the “tomato capital of Canada”. With around 750 employees in the community of just over 30,000, Heinz is the single largest employer. The H. J. Heinz corporation with its headquarters in Pittsburgh is truly a global player - or “the most global of all U.S.-based food companies” (www.heinz.com). Heinz products are sold in more than two hundred countries and produced in well over one hundred facilities worldwide. In 2008, the 32,000 employees generated sales of over ten billion dollars. Considerably smaller and, comparatively, a recent development is the rise of the greenhouse industry. According to the Windsor-Essex Development Commission (www.choosewindsorsex.com), sixty percent of all greenhouses in Ontario are in the Leamington-Kingsville area, creating one billion in farm gate value annually. Indeed, the greenhouse acreage in this area is larger than the entire U. S. Greenhouse industry combined.⁶ Although the rapid growth of this industry, beginning in the early 1990s with trade liberalization, has somewhat slowed down, the Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs (www.omafra.gov.on.ca) still observes strong increases in sales. The area’s greenhouse industry is producing for export and not for Heinz. The food processor

⁶It may be speculated that this in large part due to different climatic conditions.

obtains exclusively field produce from contract farmers for its production.

The first section of this thesis is concerned with the theoretical foundation of this research. A brief overview of the current literature in globalization will introduce the different viewpoints tackling these issues and showing the divide among scholars concerned with globalization. This is followed by the theoretical framework. Especially useful to the analysis of shifting assemblages is Foucault's governmentality approach (Foucault 1991). Although his work focused on the nation-state, Larner and Walters (2004: 8) and Ferguson and Gupta (2005: 123) call for the extension of governmentality studies to account for neoliberal globalization. This seems inevitable because the nation-state as such is not the main frame of governance anymore, as other, very diverse, players increasingly shape issues of directing, controlling and governing. In addition, to understand the dynamics of a shift in assemblages (and with it in governance), Bauman's concept of liquidity illuminates the nature of mechanisms at work.

Part two of this thesis reviews the methodology used to gather data for this thesis. I pay special attention to the fact that my initial thesis topic, which was concerned primarily with corporate governance in small communities, was ultimately not viable. What became apparent during this research was that conditions had changed in Leamington and that initial assumptions about what I would find were almost entirely incorrect. In this section I also explain the relevant data for the research, the most important of which are the ten interviews conducted with local people.

Section three considers the reassemblage of the assemblage. As indicated above, I find it necessary to explore the conditions of the past to understand the

changes presently occurring. Therefore, this section starts with a view back in time in Leamington to the decades prior to the 1990s. During this time Heinz was very much shaping the town's affairs; guiding, directing and governing it. This section is followed by an analysis of the actual shift in assemblage and examines the transition from the solid (Heinz) to the fluid (diverse and new avenues of governance). Two points of reference are discussed: the measures the municipality implemented, developing tourism and promoting Leamington as a retirement destination; and the development of what I call a *culture of agriculture*, that is the area's rise to the top spot in agricultural production and research. This is followed by a brief discussion of the problems with growth.

The conclusion addresses the main findings of this research and also gives suggestions for future research in this area.

2. Analyzing Shifting Assemblages

The current phase of economic globalization, also understood as neoliberal globalization, has created a process which has fundamentally transformed this world, as perhaps no other phenomenon. It is influencing and affecting every aspect of life in multiple ways. This includes social, economical, cultural and ideological spheres. While there is an ongoing discourse about its origins, and its impact and future implications, research on its effects on small communities *and* their creative responses to globalization has not been the focus of attention. And yet, as this research demonstrates, smaller communities are by no means to be understood necessarily as

victims of globalization. Instead there clearly are very constructive replies to the changing terms of governing in an era of neoliberal globalization.

Although the case of Leamington and Heinz is unique in many ways, it is perhaps most surprising that Heinz, the global corporation, is, in fact, not the face of globalization in Leamington anymore. Although Heinz is still producing in Leamington, the multinational corporation, traditionally controlling the affairs of the community, has indeed largely retreated. Emerging is a different pattern, which I like to view as a reassemblage or a shifting of assemblages in Ong's and Collier's (2005) understanding. In Leamington's case, it is not the global (Heinz) determining the fate of the local, but the shift of the assemblage to the local (various new and old expanding industries, revolving around different aspects of the agri-business) engaging in the global on their own terms.

The following presents a discussion on governmentality and assemblages. However, for the understanding of a community's responses to globalization, a brief look at Bauman (2000) clarifies the broader dynamics at work here. Bauman sees a shift from the old, heavy, and solid hardware to a new, light, and liquid software. Leamington's current situation clearly shows evidence of this shift: the old solid community component of Heinz, versus the new liquid or diversified economic constellation.

2.1 Globalization Discourse

For Lewellen (2002), the term *globalization* has been primarily in use since the

1990s and has indeed “become *the* academic and media buzzword of the early 21st century” (7). Held (1999) views globalization as primarily “stretching social, political and economic activities across frontiers such that events, decisions and activities in one region of the world can come to have significance for individuals and communities in distant regions of the globe” (15). Both, Held and Lewellen, agree that globalization is not a new phenomenon. During the very end of the 1980s and the early 1990s, however, a distinct and new wave of globalization set in. It is now widely known as *neo-liberal* globalization. The main pillars are rooted especially in laissez faire capitalism - the market regulates itself. Adam Smith proposed the “invisible hand of the market” to cure and regulate markets. His speculations also encourage trusting the assumed balancing capacities of the market. Today, the adoption of laissez faire (or neoliberal) doctrines mainly means the undermining of the nation state, as corporations operate globally, increasingly escaping the regulatory powers of the state. Advocates of the hyperglobalist thesis, mainly located in the business and economic spectrum of the globalization discussion (see, for example, Ohmae 1995), “argue that economic globalization is bringing about a ‘denationalization’ of economies through the establishment of transnational networks of production, trade and finance” (Held 1999: 3). Other writers see globalization as generating forces that create a ‘one-size-fit-all’ constellation - an Americanization or Westernization which leads to a global adoption of Western values and ways of life. In particular, George Ritzer’s 1993 publication *The McDonaldization of Society* supports a view of globalization which essentially means that, over time, a global Mcdonaldization creates a set standard of living and erodes

cultural diversity. There are four fundamental concepts of organizing: efficiency (choosing optimal means), calculability (precisely define quantities and preparation time in the production process), predictability (increase discipline, order and formalization), and control (since human beings are unpredictable, an increase in mechanization allows for greater control of the work process). A successful implementation of such principles ensures an outcome that is reproducible anywhere and at any time. If projected onto society, the process of governing is streamlined and control can be asserted in every domain of society. Critics often associate such aspirations with the behaviour of global corporations.

Walden Bello (2004) views globalization as a destructive force. He identifies three moments of crisis of neoliberal globalization. First the Asian financial crisis of the late 1990s caused by a destabilized free capital flows (foreword: xiii); second, the open and massive discontent with neoliberal practices and policies by protesters and so-called developing countries and the subsequent failure of the WTO meeting in Seattle in 1999 (foreword: xiv); and, third, “the collapse of the stock market and the end of the Clinton boom” (foreword: XV). In the light of current global economic development, this list can easily be amended. Addressing the inadequacies of the WTO, the policies of the Bush administration, and the failure of the global neoliberal system (which is based on free markets), Bello calls for a *deconstruction* of globalization. For him, the most important political strategy would be the dismantling of the WTO and other Bretton Woods organizations; boycotting the World Bank with a united front of stakeholders, mainly Third World nations, and foiling any consensus between the United States and the European Union in economic questions (Bello 2004: 108 -11). Bello looks at

globalization from a macro perspective. This broad or global approach inevitably neglects the small or local conditions. Leamington is a very good example of how adaptations to a changed (and in Bello's thinking) unfavourable global system are possible and do not necessarily require the immediate dismantling of neoliberal institutions.

While the above opens just a small window into the globalization debate, the following section is concerned with a much more specific theoretical approach to position Leamington's responses to global changes within the globalization discourse.

2.2 Foucault, Assemblages and Neoliberal Globalization

Much of my analysis is based on the work of Foucault. His work (see, for example, Foucault in Burchell, Gordon and Miller 1991) gave rise to the contemporary debates in *governmentality*. Foucault views modern systems of rule as having been decentralized and fragmented. For him, power cannot be reduced to a simple structure of domination through the institutions of the state. Instead, power is considered to be dispersed and consists of different relations or layers. These different relations of power are not only in different spaces (besides state institutions, this includes hospitals, schools) but they also move in different directions (not only top-down, but from the bottom up or sideways). This gives rise to a new understanding of organized practices through which we are governed.

Nikolas Rose (1999) and Michael Dean (1999, 2002) have critically extended Foucault's work and illuminated his understanding of power and governmentality. For

both authors, contemporary research in governmentality is not the analysis of the state or politics but the investigation of the “formation and transformation of theories, proposals, strategies and technologies for ‘the conduct of conduct’” (Rose 1999: 3). Although Foucault’s focus is on the power structures within the nation state (Foucault in Burchell, Gordon and Miller 1991: 102-3), Larner and Walters (2004) see the necessity to extend the analysis beyond national borders. They demonstrate that studies in global governmentality amend “Foucault’s political thought towards international studies, exploring the governance of the global, the international, the regional and many other extra-domestic spaces” (2004:i). An analysis of responses of a community to globalization, therefore, must also investigate the linkages between the local and the global. To return to Rose (1999: 3), of interest in this context are the “formation and transformation of theories, proposals, strategies and technologies of governance”. To word it differently, this transformation can be translated as a *shifting assemblage*. Ong and Collier (2005) identify an assemblage as consisting of different forms. Assemblages are temporary and, therefore, change over time. Although it does not necessarily have to include new types, these “forms are shifting, in formation, or at stake” (Ong and Collier 2005: 12).

In Foucault’s collective works, *Politics of Health in the Eighteenth Century* (1980), he makes use of the French term *dispositif*, and, as Rabinow (2003: 50) points out, it is not only translated into English as *apparatus*, but Foucault also apparently uses the term to indeed mean just that: tools or devices. In Foucault’s sense then, the term *dispositif* can be applied as “a device whose purpose is control and management”

(Rabinow 2003: 50). For the analysis of changes and challenges faced by communities in the times of neoliberal globalization, it is perhaps advisable to add a view from a different angle to the interpretation of the findings of this study. At work here is not just an *apparatus*, which, to some degree may be associated with inflexibility or even the presence of a set hierarchical pattern. The *apparatus* may mean the bureaucratic machinery of the State, which in this case is embodied by the municipality. But following Foucault's understanding of governmentality, the apparatus is also dispersed, fragmented and multi-leveled. Therefore, this analysis suggests that the use of the term of *assemblage* comes closer to defining the mechanisms at work. In contrast to *dispositif* / *apparatus*, an *assemblage* refers to a *montage* or something that is assembled from parts which are mostly of equal importance to the whole. However, Foucault's use of the *dispositif* is applicable in Leamington, too, at least in part. Rabinow (2003) thinks of the *apparatus* as the "politics of strategically chosen targets." [...] "an articulation of technologies aimed at first specifying (and to that extent creating) those targets and then controlling (distributing and regulating) them" (50). Although, there is a clear distinction between *dispositif* and *assemblage*, Rabinow's interpretation of Foucault's use of the *dispositif* matches the evidence found in this study when we consider the municipality as an actor. In this instance, the municipality is the protagonist (or part of the state) which makes decisions on behalf of the community. However, considering the community as a whole, the municipal administration is only one part. The Municipality is not the only authority determining the future of Leamington. It is merely the facilitator and administrator of the community's responses to neoliberal

globalization. Indeed, it can be argued that the municipality actually reacted to changes after it had become apparent that conditions were changing, locally and global. By that I mean that other players, mainly the greenhouse industry and agricultural research institutions, have replied to new challenges in a more timely manner than the state apparatus.

Again, I use *apparatus* here to refer to a less flexible institution. However, in adding the *apparatus* to the reactions of other parts of the community, it becomes apparent that referring to an assemblage makes much more sense. The *apparatus* is just part of the whole, of the assemblage. It is an integral part which helps to facilitate responses to globalization, but which cannot fully function without the other players (for example, private enterprises). Therefore, I find it useful to consider the *assemblage* as a kind of strategic mechanism of different forms or types that refers to a collective response to neoliberal globalization with both 'solid' and 'liquid' dimensions. As Helén (2002) puts it, "what power essentially refers to are the modes of subjectivity and potentials, the possibilities and restrictions of action, intrinsic to a specific 'strategic' assemblage" (157).

Assemblage may mean different things under specific circumstances and at specific times. *Assemblage*, in an artistic sense, refers to the making of a *collage*. It is a creative act that is based on the gathering of different materials and objects to form a work of art. In exactly this sense it also applies to governmentality. This is what I call the 'art of making assemblages.' This phrase refers directly to the community's ability to generate creative responses to a shifting composition of the economic base. Even more

importantly, the phrase may be applied to the creation of stimuli and the provision of incentives for designing and exploring new avenues of economic endeavors. By community, I am referring here both to the governmental apparatus as well as to smaller (and not so small) businesses.⁷ In Leamington, such 'new endeavors' are not new as such, as we are talking about the greenhouse industry. The techniques of growing food indoors have been used well before the 1990s. Over time there have been notable advances and the 'creation of the culture of agriculture', which I will address in the next section, has made Leamington one of the largest agricultural innovators and producers in North America.

Of particular interest to the understanding of the dynamics of *assemblages* is Bauman's (2000) concept of *liquid modernity*. In essence, Bauman argues that we live in a soft, flexible time. The innate characteristic of modernity is the ability to quickly change shapes to react to new situations or seize opportunities. The manifest contrasts we had in the past are fading or have disappeared - politically, such as the Cold War blocks of East and West; culturally, as new forms of communities and languages are created, for example, in virtual realities or the world wide web; and economically where, for example, financial capitalism operates without borders or scrutiny.

Leamington's conditions fit that description. Heinz can be seen as the old, rigid solid that is losing importance in terms of social security and governance (provision of jobs and leading community affairs). Instead, new, more flexible and smaller regimes

⁷Although, 'community' is usually understood in a different way, such as 'small groups that share a space and common interest', I find it more useful to view this local bond in an economic/governmental way for the moment.

are being introduced, most importantly the greenhouse industry, but also other economic branches such as the retirement and tourism industries.

In the following section, I outline the methodology of this research. Here, Bauman's approach is useful too. I set out to study the solid and found the liquid. In Ong's understanding, Leamington is undergoing a shift in (especially economic) assemblages.

3. The Analysis of Assemblages

My initial research topic was an analysis of the emergence of neoliberal capitalism and how corporations utilize this set of ideas and philosophies within a local setting to govern communities. Of particular interest was a specific time period beginning at the late 1980s and continuing to the present day. I follow other authors (among many others, Held and McGrew 2002, Held and Koenig-Archibugi 2002, Larner and Walters 2004) in terming this a time of *neoliberal globalization*.⁸ The main focus was to identify the ways in which these specific practices and behaviours of a multinational corporation impact small communities. The case study for this research focused on the municipality of Leamington in Southwestern Ontario and the H.J. Heinz Corporation. The Heinz corporation truly is a global corporation. The facility in Leamington was established in 1908/09 and represents an integral part of the history of the area. It also still is the single largest employer in the community, although employee

⁸I acknowledge that there have not only been different periods of *globalization*, but there have been other times of *neoliberal globalization* (I am primarily referring to the several decades prior to World War I). However, there are many differences to this past period which this research will not consider.

numbers have significantly diminished over the decades.⁹ Leamington very much depended (and to a certain extent still does) on Heinz for jobs, of production employees and surrounding farmers, supplying Heinz with tomatoes and other fruits and vegetables, and also in terms of tax income for the municipality and charitable donations to the community.

However during the analysis of the interviews, it quickly became evident that this was not the most important aspect to understand in Leamington. Referring to De Vault and McCoy (cited in Campbell and Gregor 2002: 45), I had to realize that what a researcher sets out to do, or precisely what the researcher intends to find, is not necessarily what he or she discovers during field work and the subsequent analysis. Instead of analyzing how the community is being shaped by Heinz, the focus became how Leamington reacts to neoliberal globalization. This aspect had some impact on the research methods being employed, which is discussed in the following.

My initial research methods included a comprehensive analysis of archival and web-site data. The research started at the Leamington Library to find accounts of the area's history. Because of the size of the community it could reasonably be expected that there is not a substantial amount of historical accounts. The main works are by Frances Snell (1974) and Cecil F. Scaglione (1967), both dedicating a sizable portion of their books to the history of Heinz in Leamington. Furthermore, in this initial research stage attention was given to the history of tomato production, especially in Ontario. However, there are also only a few works available, mostly in the format of bulletins or

⁹As all interviewees for this research confirmed, the cutback in jobs was exclusively related to increased mechanization in food processing.

technical reports, such as economic analysis of the industry (see, for example, Prescott 1981 or Butler 1951).¹⁰ The cultural consequences of tomato production are especially being tracked by Deborah Barndt (2002) and, in connection with migrant workers, by Tanya Basok (2002).

Also of interest was the website of the Pittsburgh Post-Gazette, since Heinz has its headquarters in Pittsburgh. Additionally, the Heinz company has an extensive website which actually would allow for an independent research project. For the initial research topic, the focus was primarily on Heinz's construction of *corporate governance*. The dominant interpretation of the company is compiled in a document entitled "Heinz: Global Code of Conduct" (www.heinz.com/our-company/ethics-and-compliance/global-code-of-conduct.aspx. Accessed on November 15, 2006). The twenty page document aims at providing guidelines on how to consort with shareholders, competitors, supervisors, fellow employees, consumers and so forth and on how "to do what is right" (4).

After conducting a number of interviews, it became clear that the subject of the initial research topic should not be the main focus point and my interest in corporate governance issues and communities shifted to an analysis of community reactions to globalization. (The actual interviews are the subject of a discussion below.) Therefore the focus changed towards other evidence, mainly to the website of the Municipality of Leamington. As with other communities, through this medium Leamington offers information for locals, visitors and investors, community news and so forth. Most

¹⁰The tomato industry in California gets more attention by scholars; see especially Friedland and Baron (1975, 1976).

importantly, it showcases the community and its attractions including the marina, bird and butterfly migrations, and describes Leamington as “a community where retirement living is at its best” (www.learmington.ca), further substantiating views gathered in the interviews. The website also offers a community profile based on Statistics Canada with indicators such as population increase, growth of industries other than Heinz, ethnic origin and level of schooling. Such numbers help to establish a pattern of change as part of Leamington’s response to globalization.

By far the most important sources of information for my research are ten interviews conducted during the period of October 2006 and March 2007.¹¹ The data were gathered through semi-structured, open-ended-interviews. During the preparation of questions for an interview, the intention was to ask particular key questions, such as the interviewee’s view on the relationship between Heinz and the community and why the interviewee thinks that Heinz is still operating in Leamington. However, very quickly, most of the interviews took on a dynamic of their own. Holstein and Gubrium formulate this phenomenon like this: “The standpoint from which information is offered is continually developed in relation to ongoing interview interaction” (1995: 15). In this case, the phenomenon might be attributed to the interviewees’ eagerness to share their views, experiences and information. Only two of the interviewees were concerned about confidentiality issues and asked that the interview not be taped.

Eight of the ten interviews took place at the interviewee’s workplace. Especially

¹¹Neither local Heinz officials nor PR manager at Canada Headquarters in Toronto were available for an interview. Additionally, the employees of the Heinz booth at the Tomato Festival grew immediately suspicious when asked questions, and declined to answer any questions.

municipal officials were not concerned about privacy or confidentiality. In all of the interviews there, the office door remained open during the interview. This openness may be attributed to the specific (positive) work climate. Or, perhaps, closed doors may signal secretiveness or raise suspicions that what is being said inside may be detrimental to the community.

One of the interviews actually took place inside the Heinz facility, although the interviewee is not an employee of Heinz. Instead, the participant manages the local Heinz gift shop which also includes a small museum featuring Heinz memorabilia. The interview was hampered by several disruptions from tourists acquiring Heinz shirts, beach towels and other Heinz advertizing media. For this research in Leamington, it appears that the interviewees preferred that the interview was conducted at the place of work. Speculating on the reasons certainly points to the obvious: no extra travel required and the interview takes place during paid working hours. As indicated above, confidentiality did not seem to be a critical issue. However, for the researcher that can mean disruptions in the flow of the interview: a phone rings, a coworker needs to ask a question. During the interview with Mike, the memorabilia collector, the several attempts to return the conversation to before the interruption failed and potentially useful information may have been lost.

Another interview was conducted at the Windsor Public Library which also led to some distractions. The interview was twice interrupted by a librarian, demanding to keep the voices down. A request for a more private room was denied, although there were three glass-enclosed conference rooms available. Thus the interview was conducted in a more quiet manner, making the analysis of the tape at times a guessing

game because what was said was very hard to make out. (Please refer to appendix A for a list of the participants.)

The following section has mainly two parts. The first examines Leamington in the era prior to the early 1990s. During this time, Leamington was dominated by Heinz in many respects. Heinz has been the dominant point of reference in terms of community identity, job provision, tax income for the municipality and support of the local hospital, amateur sports and other community expenses. The second part analyses the shift in this pre-1990s assemblage. New avenues lead away from Heinz and we see the rise of new - and the expansion of existing - industries in the community.

4. Reassembling the Assemblage

4.1 Memories and Relationships: Changing Impressions of Heinz and Leamington

In the view of many, especially the older residents, Leamington and H. J. Heinz are synonymous. For about one hundred years, Leamington has been a single-industry town, literally based upon all aspects of the tomato - its growing, its processing and its research. Even visibly, the town itself is still dominated by the plant as it lies just a few blocks to the south of the small town center along Erie Street, one of the main axes of the town. The visitor literally drives through the factory to reach the marina and the ferry docks to Pelee Island and Sandusky, Ohio, passing under a covered conveyor belt which connects the two parts of the factory to the left and right of the street. The two Heinz smokestacks were a familiar landmark, indicating the heart of the town (only one

remains today). As Clair, a member of the Leamington Chamber of Commerce and former Heinz employee, puts it “a lot of people and their families started here and their grandchildren work here. [...] So it does hold a lot of memories for a lot of people.” This includes the distinct aroma in the town’s air when the factory produced vinegar or ketchup as well as the sound of the Heinz whistle after which it was said that people used to set their clocks. Leamington’s affection with the tomato cannot be overlooked. The visitor information booth is housed within a giant plastic tomato and the largest festival in the town is also dedicated to the tomato and features an H. J. Heinz stall with Heinz merchandise and free tomato juice. Clair points out that traveling town representatives always gave out Heinz ‘pickle pins’ and sought to reinforce the association of Leamington with Heinz. Mary remembers that “when you go to a trade show and talk, people say ‘Leamington that’s where Heinz is, isn’t it?’” Thus not only was Leamington’s identity clearly locked in with the existence of the Heinz plant but this perception of identity has also been successfully employed to portray Leamington outside the community.¹² This visual representation used to include Heinz’s primary product: Ketchup. The labels of ketchup bottles produced in Leamington bore the image of the Heinz factory. With a hint of sadness, Mary explains that “we would really like to see them put Leamington back on the ketchup bottles. Well now it’s a corporate thing; it’s just made in Canada. And there are so many label requirements and you could only put so much on them”.

Since Heinz opened its Leamington plant in 1908/09, it has been central to the

¹²Again, citing with Anderson (1983), Heinz created what people in Leamington imagined to be their community.

town in many respects. While Heinz located the plant in the area due to excellent growing conditions for tomatoes, legumes and the like, and also because of its location on the shores of Lake Erie. This allowed for easy access to the shipping lines of the Great Lakes. Moreover, Heinz's choice of location was also supported by the government, as Peter from the municipality indicates: "They got some grants to come here". However, Heinz also benefitted and still does from the rural population to make up the workforce for the factory and also to grow the required produce. The basis to this is in large part the large Mennonite community of Leamington. Of German decent, the 27 percent who consider themselves Mennonite (Windsor-Essex Development Commission 2008: 6-6) are traditionally agricultural workers, thus providing a potentially well suited workforce. Peter puts a bit more bluntly: "People have always been looking forward to getting a job at Heinz....specially for those who were less educated and didn't have as many options." A further aspect is the general level of education in the workforce in Leamington. Adam pointed out that the demographics of Leamington show a substantially lower number of highschool graduates than, for example, Windsor. Depending on the time frame, "around thirty percent do not have a highschool degree, mostly due to the traditional employment opportunities on local farms. So, the work being offered doesn't require an education, we are labour intensive." From the viewpoint of the municipality it meant a smaller pool to recruit from of, at least theoretically, apt people to manage the towns issues. Heinz's higher management¹³, with a higher education, offered such faculties. Therefore, it is not surprising that Heinz

¹³Even after Heinz Headquarters moved from Leamington to Toronto during the 1960 this situation hadn't changed much.

employees could be found in all the key positions of the community. They were not only on certain governing boards, such as the Union Water System, or the community hospital, but also in the Chamber of Commerce. Clair remembers “Heinz pretty well run the chamber at one time”.

Heinz was, and in some instances still is, also the main donor and financial contributor to the social life of the community. Clair explains that “Heinz has been very supportive. [...] When we were having a project, a big function going on, Heinz was very, very generous. ‘You let us know and we give you so much per year’. And it was almost like an endless thing at one time.” Mary, a member of the economic development office, agrees, “the relationship has always been a strong one. It [Heinz] has always been a generous supporter of local events.” Sport events and facilities and popular festivals were, and to a certain extent still are, preferred targets of corporate sponsoring by Heinz. Peter from the Mayor’s office still refers to Heinz as being still a ‘good corporate citizen’. Heinz donated land and money for the building of the new arena and continues to support the yearly Tomato Festival It also associates its name with athletes, as the following ad from the Leamington Post of June 11 1997 illustrates:

“Congratulations

Darren McCarty and the Detroit Red Wings on Winning the 1997 Stanley Cup

Heinz Canada proudly salutes the Best of the Best

Darren is another winner from Leamington

- just like Heinz -

There’s no other than Keinz!!!”

This cultural and economic relationship of Heinz with the community made Heinz in many respects the true governing body of the town. James, a former engineer at the plant recalls that in those days, the town “was practically run by Heinz”. Quite unusual for North America, Heinz even owned half the town’s water treatment plant, a public utility that in other municipalities is exclusively owned by the public authorities. As Adam, member of the municipal administration explains, only recently the “provincial government has changed how municipalities operate water treatment. Only municipalities are allowed ownership, so Heinz is no longer allowed. But they are a preferred customer, so they get a wholesale rate for the water. That’s because they are so large.” Although municipal official strongly abnegate that Heinz is receiving any kind of incentive for their continuing operations in Leamington, the water issue demonstrates that there are provisions to accommodate Heinz. And water indeed is a big issue when considering the plant requires about fourteen million gallons of fresh water at peak production (Leamington Post October 22, 1997: 1A).

Heinz’ involvement in local decision-making has been quite substantial. Clair points out “at one point they almost owned the community, nothing went on without Heinz.” Selma and Liz, downtown merchants, agree. For Selma: “Heinz used to support the whole town - Heinz was the livelihood of the town”. The discretionary leeway of the municipality was for the most part illusionary. As George, who is familiar with the local history, sees it, “the town accommodated them so much, for example, supply of the workforce, tax breaks, they even now supply us with hydro [an emergency diesel generator that, in case of a power-outage, supplies the plant and the town with

electricity¹⁴]. Heinz is their main employer, so they are giving them as many breaks as possible to keep them here.” Following this line of thought, the next section will briefly examine Heinz’ apparent retreat from community affairs and consider reasons why Heinz still produces in Leamington.

4.2 From a Solid to a Fluid Assemblage: The Shift in the Economic Base

As already pointed out, Heinz was and to some extent still is, a major player in the community, so a closure of the plant would have a devastating impact. Rumors about the future of Heinz Leamington did frequently surface, but as Peter sees it, it’s because “it’s a smaller town and because it’s the major industry it probably gets magnified and any time there are rumors Heinz is looking to close the plant. Those rumors occur fairly often, and normally they are nothing but rumors”. However, during the mid-1990’s the community saw itself confronted with a potentially devastating scenario: Heinz closing its year-round production lines of beans, baby foods, pasta etc. leaving behind only the seasonal tomato products. Peter recalls that “Heinz has in the past fifteen years closed plants. That didn’t used to occur. They were used to opening plants and now it’s globalization and a different way of getting product and shipping

¹⁴This emergency diesel generator is located near the marina of the town. According to an engineer, the capacity of the generator points to much larger energy needs than the current production would require in order to keep functional during a power-outage. It can be assumed that the facility was built in times when the plant required about double the amount of energy they use today. Although the generator was installed for the only purpose of keeping production going for Heinz in case of loss of electricity, today it is big enough to provide emergency power to the local hospital and is capable of providing power to most of the households in Leamington. According to Clair, the annual Tomato Festival, in its 23rd year in 2005, has only once been cancelled due to the loss of power.

product from independent suppliers in some cases, has made the threat a lot more real". Due to global economic difficulty, the head office in Pittsburgh recorded that the introduced savings and downsizing processes during the early 1990s have not been enough to ensure ample earnings for the shareholders. During contract negotiations, Heinz stated that it is imperative that there must be radical cuts. The worker rejected the contract twice and Heinz Leamington sent out 450 layoff notices to workers. Mary from the economic development office summarizes the situation like this: "[This] was a real problem." There was a real fear that Heinz would leave the community. Major production lines were supposed to be removed, and many people would be without jobs. So "there was a commission going to Ottawa [to negotiate]. There was a trade issue going on between the States and Canada. [...] A number of people went to Ottawa and to appeal to the Government: 'look we need to straighten that out because we are very reliant on Heinz at that point.'" As Mary puts it, "The situation was straightened out and everything went back to normal." This 'straightening out' included cut-backs in wages and job losses. The wages, however, were readjusted a few years later. The Leamington Post reports on May 7, 1997: "Heinz plant receives vote of confidence; wages returned".

Heinz employees here got a vote of confidence and, in a surprising turn, the 50 cent/hour in wages lost in 1994 were returned (this surprised all!). President Sneddon said the Leamington plant had passed a global review by its corporate parent and was now positioned for growth and expansion. The wage increase was, according to Sneddon, to be viewed as a gesture of good will and without any conditions; the new Heinz Canada management restored the 50 cents/hour effective May 1st. Employees

were also told that had the cost-cutting efforts not been undertaken in 1994, which affected about 200 workers, the local plant would “be closing under the current restructuring.”

It can reasonably be argued that this crucial incident demonstrated to the community its vulnerability to global developments and its economic dependence on Heinz in no uncertain terms for the first time. As all interviewees have confirmed to me, at that stage, a closure of the Heinz plant would have been devastating to the community. “They are still our biggest employer. Providing a significant amount of tax dollars to the community and payroll dollars; and our biggest risk is that they would decide leaving Leamington. And, you know, corporately those things happen” Mary admits. Thereafter, the municipality slowly but surely reacted with an attempt at diversification of their economic base. This represents a shift in assemblages: from a solid and compact assemblage with Heinz at its centre, to a fluid and flexible assemblage made up of diverse and smaller industries.

Beginning in the early 1990's, plans concerning an amalgamation within Essex County appeared. The goal was to restructure the county from twenty-one local municipalities to seven. The amalgamation finally took on form in 1999. In Leamington's case, the town amalgamated with Mersea Township and the name of “The Corporation of the Town of Leamington” (for more information, see the website of the County of Essex at www.countyofessex.on.ca/countyhistory/restructuring).

While for some of the other amalgamated communities the restructuring presented more problems than advantages (see, for example, The Windsor Star from March 16, 2008), for Leamington it seems to have been an economic windfall, at least

in the view of some interviewees, especially Mary. The merger with Mersea Township brought a number of economic solutions in terms of municipal finances and economic land acquisition especially for the expansion of the greenhouse industry. As Peter from the municipality explains, the amalgamation was a “huge change because Leamington itself was a small urban municipality of about 15,000. Mersea township was rural - a surrounding rural population of about 10,000. So now that it is combined, we are able to expand”.

With amalgamation, the water system needed to be expanded too.

“We had to expand our water system for a variety of reasons, the growth of the greenhouse industry was one, but we also experienced a tremendous residential and commercial expansion. So without the greenhouse industry we would still have to expand the water supply. Maybe not as rapidly, maybe not as far as we did. But it would have to be done anyway”. While Heinz not only is a big user of fresh water and also produces a sizable amount of waste water during the production mainly of tomato products, the company has a special stage within the community. As Mary explains, “Heinz has a lot of pulp and seed and stuff and that has to be treated before whatever you do with it. The greenhouse industry isn’t like that. It’s all fresh consumption. [...] They are strictly a water user.” In the past, Heinz has enjoyed very low rates for water and sewage treatment because they were (and still are) a “preferred customer”, this arrangement with the municipality is rooted in the unique relationship between these two entities. With Heinz having been by far the biggest water user, the company accommodated the community by subsidizing (and with it acquiring part ownership) the municipal water plant. As Peter from the municipality points out, to his knowledge,

Heinz was the only corporation in North America that actually owned parts of a public utility. Due to provincial legislative changes, Heinz cannot own any stakes in waterworks anymore. Additionally, of course, the rapid growth of greenhouses and other industries, as well as residential growth, decrease Heinz's relative importance as a water user.

One of the key questions of every interview I undertook for this study was to inquire about why Heinz still is producing in Leamington when, apparently, they lost interest in the town's affairs. What comes to light is a strict neoliberal rational.

According to James, the most important aspect for Heinz to continue to produce in Leamington is the facility's competitiveness. The retired Heinz employee points out that Heinz Leamington is not only competing with other companies in the food industry, such as Kraft Foods, Campbell Soup Company, or ConAgra Foods, but more importantly, with other Heinz plants. So far, Heinz Leamington has been able to successfully compete, which, according to Peter, is mainly accounted for by the exceptional quality: "One thing Heinz [Leamington] has always looked at is the quality of the product, and it's number one in their system". Cost issues are also of importance. Mary says "they constantly have to improve themselves to keep the cost down. So, they appeal to local farmers to increase production and decrease production costs. And they have been able to do that constantly". Peter points out, that a report done by the KPMG¹⁵ shows that "the cost of production, for example, in food processing, our region in South-Western Ontario is one of the lowest in North America as far as total cost of production. And they looked at things like labour and energy costs, taxes and so forth". Labour

¹⁵The KPMG is a globally operating, Swiss based, cooperative, providing audit, tax and advisory services various clients.

costs especially are being kept low by employing primarily Mexican transmigrant worker in agri-businesses. Referring to non-migrant workers, Peter adds, “the health care benefits provided by the Canadian government are [also] a big asset. Its one of the biggest advantages to labour costs in Canada”. Peter closes by saying: “The bottom line, I guess, is that they make money”.

Interviewees outside the municipal complex point more quickly to the incentives provided to Heinz by the municipality, in terms of tax breaks, special rates for water, zoning laws and so forth, that have been convincing to Heinz to continue to produce in Leamington. George views this as the main reason: “Heinz is still here, [...] because the city is giving them as many breaks as possible. They accommodate them as much as possible”. Future research should consider taking up this issue again to document and analyze this specific relationship between the municipality and Heinz in Leamington.

Heinz’s standing within the community has changed. From the centre and driving force of the community, providing jobs and tax dollars, donating to charity, sports and amusement events, to a more reserved, inactive, silent position. This apparatus, Heinz, and the traditional assemblage is seen as somewhat outdated, even troublesome for Leamington facing a different global world order. There is a perceived need to shift and add to this assemblage.

A visual representation of Leamington without Heinz can be found at the newly renovated hospital wing in Leamington. There you find a wall in one of the hallways is decorated with what appears to be a recently made mural. It depicts various attributes associated with Leamington and positioning the community within its surrounding. Depicted are neighbouring towns (Kingsville, Cottam, Ruthven and Wheatley), the

welcome centre (the large red plastic tomato), tomato and cucumber fields, fruit stands, monarch butterflies, Lake Erie, greenhouses and the hospital. Heinz, however, is not pictured in this mural, although the facility is visually the most obvious reference to Leamington.

The next two sections seek to illuminate the actual strategies adopted by the municipality to seek out new industries and alternative development plans. The following section elaborates how the 'new Leamington' is being envisioned through alternative economic development plans that include tourism and promoting Leamington as a retirement community. Then, in the section that follows, I discuss innovations in agriculture as part of the diversification of the municipality's economic base.

4.3. Measures the Municipality Implemented to Foster a Diversification of the Economic Base

As mentioned earlier, the mid-1990s saw a culmination of strains in the municipality's relationship with Heinz. It was, at least in the recent past, a crucial moment. Clair recalls, "Yes. We were really worried, because I was here [the Chamber of Commerce] at the time. And I thought if we were asked [...] we are a one-industry-town and Heinz was our only big industry. That would be death, I mean, the effect for our stores and everybody. [...] You know, all of a sudden, houses are going up for sale. The bottom falls out of everything." Although Clair is, at this point in the interview, referring to the current automotive industry's problems in Windsor, Ontario, she clarifies her point by adding "so, in a little community like us, it [even a part closure of Heinz] would be devastating". She recounts that during the mid-1990s, the town actively

started to seek alternatives to their economic bases: The municipality started “looking for another industry” that would come to Leamington.

One of the first official steps was the introduction of an economic development office during the 1990s. As Clair recalls, “This office is fairly new. It started with this young fellow who did this study [of the economic conditions and prospects in the Leamington area]”. This gave rise to the idea to staff a full-time position with a professional. The office’s main purpose is described on the website of the Municipality:

“The Economic Development Officer is responsible for the marketing and promotion of the community to retain business; support tourism; expand the economic base; and improve the quality of life and competitiveness of the community. The Economic Development Officer liaises with outside interests; works with a variety of community and regional groups; networks with various agencies and their representatives; and helps support the regional economic development efforts undertaken by the Windsor-Essex County Development Commission”.

The main objective is to “further the competitiveness of Leamington’s current economic base particularly in farming, food processing and retail industries”. Farming, including the greenhouse industry, is, of course, an obvious part of the community’s economic development. However, there are a growing number of food processing facilities, especially canneries, in the area. Both, the greenhouse productions and the canneries are unrelated to the Heinz operation. Greenhouse products, processed or unprocessed, are going mainly into export. Since Heinz has its own cannery, other canneries in and around Leamington, such as Unico, process produce from greenhouses and growers

not in contract with Heinz.

However, the Economic Development Office has proven to be one of the driving forces behind a 'globalized appearance' of the town. With that, I primarily mean the emergence of large national, multinational and global corporations, such as Canadian Tire, A&P and the 'Superstore' (Zehrs), RONA, and Wal-Mart, collectively also known as 'Big-Box-Stores'. This is not only a visual expression of globalization but also a main streaming of local consumer habits, reflecting a prescribed global taste.

During my interview with Mary, she pointed out that the Economic Development Office's successes are to be found in the area of business attraction. "We are now being seen as a regional sub-market." She contributes this 'success' mainly to the arrival of retail giant Wal-Mart. She goes on to say that "I know, it's an awful thing to say in most people's minds, [...but] that's one of the best things in Leamington that ever happened". In most people's minds, Wal-Mart provided around 400 low-paying jobs, and, with that, damaged the local retail industry in its core. As Selma and Liz point out, there was a significant shake-up within the downtown business arrangement after Wal-Mart opened its doors. Selma and Liz's store was hardly affected as they cater to a niche market. Put in different words, their items appeal to opponents of (neoliberal) globalization. However, many of the small shops went out of business as they lost out to the big promoters of neoliberal globalization, such as Wal-Mart. Like other towns of that size, Leamington's inner district saw a drop in small business retail and a rise in Pizza Parlors, Mexican restaurants and similar establishments.¹⁶

¹⁶This change comes with what many of the interviewees felt to be a growing inconvenience in the downtown core: the lack of opportunity to stroll around to shop for new

Mary sees it from a different perspective. "Certainly Wal-Mart has put a strain on the commercial environment but so have all the other businesses that have arrived. So, you have to look at the checks and balances". However, the municipality plans to provide additional space for expansion, including for Wal-Mart. "New commercial growth will take place up towards the bypass [north of Leamington]. And there is a rumour that Wal-Mart will relocate there and build a store that is three-times the size of the current one", Mary speculates.

Other chain businesses seemed to have a harder time locating in Leamington. Fast food giant Taco Bell "wanted to come here for twenty years but couldn't because there was no 'good' space for them here", George explains. "Now with amalgamation, they can come". George refers to the re-zoning of assigned land after amalgamation which also included commercial, non-agricultural parcels.

Besides the attraction of retail operations and agro-business and food processing (I will return to the latter below), Mary describes other main objectives of the Economic Development office: "We knew that Leamington was growing and that we had unique qualities that weren't being addressed at a regional level. And that is why the office was established and we went through a strategic planning process that identified some areas that we would focus on and that was tourism [...] and retirement".

clothes or other items which need time and selection to buy. Many also indicated an uneasiness with a perceived concentration of migrant workers in downtown after the workers have finished work.

4.3.1 Developing Tourism

For Mike, a local Heinz memorabilia collector, there is no better place than Leamington: “Look at it. Leamington has been voted the ‘Best Place to Live’ in 2006.¹⁷ We have the large new marina, there is Point Pelee, the fishing is incredible and the weather here is perfect”. Additionally, the town offers substantial numbers of facilities, such as a twin-pad arena and an Olympic-size swimming pool, the surrounding network of trails for biking or hiking, and access to one of North America’s foremost places to observe migratory birds and butterflies.

One of the Chamber of Commerce’s activities is to facilitate the tourism sector in the town. “Mostly”, Clair explains, “people would call us and say, ‘I want to come for the weekend, what can I do?’ and we would send a package or answer e-mails”. According to Clair, after agriculture/food processing, the expansion of tourism is regarded by the municipality as one of the main targets for further development and she clearly ranks tourism as Leamington’s second largest industry. She is, however, less optimistic about the range of success that is targeted by the municipality:

“I find that the hospitality part is getting bigger and bigger.¹⁸ [But] it’s nothing the town would like to admit, like the councillors, [who say] because we are on the water,

¹⁷*Canadian Business* annually issues a rating of the quality of life of Canadian cities. Criteria are, among others, prosperity, housing, weather and air quality, and lifestyle. In 2007 Leamington was ranked fourteenth.

¹⁸This is a development which is common in town cores. With the arrival of ‘big-box-stores’, smaller downtown businesses often have to close and the real estate is usually occupied by eateries such as pizza parlors and falafel shops. However, this trend is particularly pronounced in Leamington due to the immense number of Mexican migrant workers. Over the past decade or so, Mexican restaurants and shops mushroomed in the small town core.

they [the tourists] are gonna come. No, they are not. People get very choosy and if you are not up and modern and keeping things going, then.... Because Leamington is not a destination. It's not. People come through Leamington to go to the Point."¹⁹

Selma and Liz, downtown merchants, also summarize the downtown situation differently. Liz explains that the reason for the expansion of the hospitality industry mainly lies within the nature of such businesses: "Pizza places don't need a lot of investment. They cannot take the risk, so they don't have a big inventory". Thus, this kind of undertaking in the hospitality industry is relatively easy to set up and maintain. The reasons why the downtown core is attracting such businesses are manifold. For Leamington, however, there are two main reasons. First, the expansion of so-called "big-box-stores" displace many of the traditional, long-established small businesses from the town's centre, leaving retail space unoccupied. Second, these retail spots not only attracted pizza parlors but also created spaces for a growing number of restaurants catering to the large Mexican clientele. The Mexican population of Leamington consist, for the most part, of migrant workers who work in the greenhouses and fields. (For a comprehensive analysis of Mexican migrant workers in Leamington, please see Basok, 2002.) Many migrant workers are from the same area or even the same village of Mexico but work on different farms in and around Leamington. In the evenings and on weekends small groups gather in downtown streets to chat about their daily businesses. As Clair explains, "some people complain. [...] They [the migrant

¹⁹She is referring to Point Pelee National Park which lies about ten auto minutes away and is renown for its excellent birding.

workers] mingle up-town which makes people that live there very uncomfortable". Mary sees problems mostly for the municipality's efforts to restructure the downtown core. She realizes that "in a sense, it [the downtown core] has lost maybe some of its visual appeal [...but] I think, all communities are experiencing this, because the modern commercial business isn't that attractive as family-run traditional stuff". She acknowledges that Leamington's up-town (or the community's core) "is going through a huge transformation. [...] and we want to recapture some of the stuff we may have lost". Mary admits this is a "slow and painful process, but it appears that the retailers in up-town are ready for that". Liz, one of such 'retailers', says, her business only survived because she is serving a niche clientele.

For Selma and Liz, the region's growth in wine-growing operations is an asset for Leamington and Leamington's small businesses. Although some wineries were established several decades ago and can be considered to be part of the traditional assemblage of the area (including Pelee Island Winery, Colio and others), at least four wineries have only recently established businesses.²⁰ This attracts wine enthusiasts to the area who can tour a multitude of vineyards. It furthermore boosts the image of the area as the wine industry is generally associated with 'good living', 'enjoying exquisite taste', 'old-world charm', 'romance' and even 'going green'²¹. Local entrepreneurs are quick to seize opportunities to profit from this trend. Future Homes, for example, is

²⁰Viewpoint Estate in 2000, Erie Shore Vineyard between 1997-2001, Sprucewood Shores in 2006, Sanson Estate in 2003. I do not claim this to be a complete list of all newly opened wine-growing businesses.

²¹The wine industry is imagined as a 'clean industry' not only because it produces organic wines but also because wineries usually do not produce toxic waste or bad smells and so forth.

actually a local brokerage firm involved in all aspects of real-estate. They are also, however, promoting the Pelee Island and Lake Erie North Shore wine regions - and therefore are seeking to enhance the local image and, with it, potential tourists or real estate buyers with higher equity ratings. An article themed - "Wine By The Glass. Bringing New Visitors To Ontario Wine Country", the company's website reports on the Province's loosening of restrictions in the provision of wine samples at wineries and also educates about the Ontario wine regions. (For further reference, please see www.future-homes.com/other/wineries.htm.)

With flashy images of happy pensioners, the firm's website also highlights another 'alternative' industry the municipality seeks to promote: the retiree market.

4.3.2 Promoting Leamington as a Retirement Heaven

Part of envisioning a 'new Leamington' is based on the promotion of the town as a place that offers all the modern amenities and conveniences within a country style setting. Mary explains, "Leamington is unique in a lot of ways and this is kind of how we market ourselves: as an urban-rural community. It's a comfortable size with a terrific public service infrastructure, public transit and local hospital". Mary credits especially the climatic conditions for Leamington's ability to attract retirees: "the weather has allowed us to promote ourselves as a retirement destination. And that's been a good thing for us from a market perspective".

In their brief explanation regarding the reasons why Leamington has been ranked the 'best place to live' in Canada in 2006, Tim Whitehead of *Canadian Business* (issue of April 2006), emphasizes the more sedate choices of activities the region

offers, especially birding and easily manageable hiking and biking trails are suited for a more mature audience. Therefore, the municipality seeks to cater to a certain age-group of retirees with additional amenities. "We are targeting the younger retirement market - 55 + rather than the elderly market", Mary explains. To be noticed, the municipality envisions that businesses go along with this development to accommodate retirees with everything from suitable clothing to elderly-adapted services. Mary briefly outlines the municipality's plans: "We have a developer coming in who would want to put up an entire retirement community - self-contained, with its own recreation center and inland lakes and such". Although these are still future plans, elderly-adapted facilities are already providing senior citizens with convenient services, such as Meals On Wheels, the Half-Century Club, or home maintenance programs. Higher standard residences for the elderly are catering to the needs and wants of this specific clientele. George adds: "We are second in all of Canada for senior citizens because of the quality of life Leamington can offer".

The retiree-market, however, has become rather lucrative and is highly competitive. This has not gone unnoticed by neighbouring communities. A simple drive through Essex County reveals that Leamington faces serious contenders. Kingsville and Amherstburg, but also Windsor with its luxurious river-front facilities, offer similar conditions and amenities. The most recent to enter this 'race for retiree's money' is Tecumseh. The town's mayor and the Reichmann Seniors Housing Development Corporation seek to build a \$25-million luxury seniors residence overlooking Lake St. Clair (*Windsor Star A5, October 23, 2008*).

4.4. A Culture of Agriculture: Research, Agricultural Innovations and the Greenhouse Industry

In the minds of most people, Leamington is historically associated with agriculture. Many would agree that Heinz laid one of the foundation stones for this.²² George, a resident interested in the local history, summarized it in the following way: “Leamington today would not be the town it is without the company because of the whole agricultural sector which is the main thrust of Leamington now. That wouldn’t be there if it wasn’t for the factory”. Mike, a collector of Heinz memorabilia agrees, “Leamington is what it is today because of Heinz”. Although the past decades continue to confirm Leamington’s agricultural identity, they also significantly changed its appearance.

Since Heinz opened the plant in 1908/09 it significantly contributed to the creation of what can be called a ‘culture of agriculture’ in the region. By this I mean the steady expansion of areas under cultivation and a significant concentration of agricultural research facilities which develop new techniques (e.g. hydroponics)²³ to grow a variety of crops, among them tomatoes, cucumbers, peppers and beans. This led, among other things, to a concentration of agricultural research, making the area one of the most innovative agricultural regions in North America. Especially two facilities stand out in the area, the Greenhouse and Processing Crops Research Centre

²²Another influence came from various immigrants with a traditionally agricultural background, especially Mennonites and Italians.

²³Hydroponics refer to the science of growing plants without actual soil. The advantage is that plants can be grown in regions or climates which do not usually support the growth of plants. This technique is mostly used in greenhouses.

in Harrow, ON, which is the largest facility of this nature in North America, and the Honourable Eugene F. Whelan Experimental Farm near Woodslee, ON. Both belong to the Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada and generated over the years substantial advancements in agricultural and seed technologies. To underline the strong food-growing base, the Essex County Agricultural Hall of Fame in Harrow, ON, recognizes the accomplishments of individuals in this area on a yearly basis.

The onset of neoliberal globalization, and the implementation of the NAFTA regime in 1994, eased border restrictions and allowed for a less hindered flow of capital, products and produce as well as labour. The concentration of agricultural production and research made the area increasingly attractive to greenhouse operations, which saw good prospects in growing and exporting 'improved' varieties, grown in easily controlled environments - greenhouses and hydroponic-based - throughout North America. The larger greenhouse operations have set up distribution centers mainly in New Mexico, Arizona and Mexico to easily facilitate exports from Leamington. Since amalgamation, Leamington has the largest greenhouse density in North America. The above mentioned introduction of an economic development office also sees it's primary task in furthering "the competitiveness of Leamington's current economic base particularly in farming, food processing and retail industries" (quoted from the municipal's website).

The amalgamation secured more land for the establishment of greenhouse complexes in the municipality. As Mary points out, "our biggest issue is finding appropriate parcels of land for everybody". From the viewpoint of the municipality, amalgamation has only temporarily eased land pressures. "Right now it's really tough

and it's very expensive here", Mary added. The most highly priced land in the area are the parcels which are designated for greenhouse use. Mary explains, "it's different than regularly cultured land at over six thousand [dollars] an acre. And when you look at greenhouses, it's all of a sudden one million dollars". Although most of the amalgamated land of the surrounding townships has been in agricultural use before, the zoning process is time consuming. As she puts it, "The official plan process has been taking seven years now. And then came the automatic delays and they have to re-zone".²⁴ Therefore, Leamington is still in a state of change and flux.

However, the expanding greenhouse industry has not only altered the appearance of the surrounding areas, making globalization in the municipality visible and tangible, but also spurred another side effect. The North-American Free Trade Agreement allowed for the influx of primarily Mexican migrant workers finding employment in the agriculture sector (for low wages, inadequate housing conditions and insufficient access to health care). This has changed the appearance of the down-town core, or 'up-town' as it is called by locals. In the following section I briefly examine the greenhouse industry as part of the changing assemblage of globalizing Leamington.

In the late 1980s and beginning 1990s, the greenhouse industry was still in its infancy. Today, the greenhouses in the municipality of Leamington have the highest density of any greenhouse complex in North America. They even outrun California. In

²⁴Reasons for a necessity of re-zoning can be many-fold. It may be due to environmental challenges or disputes over the proposed land use, as has happened, for example, with the new RONA store. Mary explains that RONA requested a particular parcel of land; on the adjacent parcel, "another developer comes and wants to put fifty houses next to it. So, it doesn't make any sense; and we are seeing more and more of this because of the" [difficulties in] "the availability of land".

fact, this industry has become the most significant in Leamington development in many respects, one aspect of which is, according to some interviewees, its role in financing community projects. Selma states that the greenhouses have made “tremendous donations to the arena” [the F. T. Sherk Aquatic & Fitness Centre].

However, these operations are not without issues for the community. As Mary points out with regards to safety and feasibility concerns, “each greenhouse expansion has to go through a modeling exercise to show that they’re not putting a strain on the water [and other systems]”. As briefly mentioned above, the union water system was put under a heavy strain by the expansion of greenhouse operations.

4.5 Problems with growth

The amalgamation and Leamington’s continuous development brought its own set of challenges for the community. As Mary explains, “the way residential growth has gone in Leamington is closely linked to commercial growth. They often lie very close. For example, Klinger²⁵ opened a [...] plant on Seneca Road right near the residential area. And that is part of the amalgamation, too. Because that used to be township and there was no residential area there”. Although Klinger did put noise protection barriers and the like in place, there still are issues with the adjacent residents. “So, there is this encroachment and the ‘not-in-my-backyard-syndrome’. [...] There has always been an issue with plastic odors and such. But for those things there are public hearings and they try to be a good corporate citizen, too. And such problems seem to oblivate itself

²⁵She refers to Elring Klinger, a transnational corporation which primarily manufactures sealing products for the automobile industry.

with the recent changes they have made at the plant". Although this sounds like a workable solution for all involved, it may be questioned whether or not the adjacent residents are indeed content with the efforts of this corporate neighbour. A look on the map shows that Seneca Drive lies on route to one of Leamington area's main attractions: Point Pelee National Park, and most visitors to the park indeed have the opportunity to experience plastic odors and noise from the facility.

5. Conclusion

Certainly, Leamington is unique. It is unique because no other place shares the same economic, cultural and historic constellation. However, this does not mean that there are no other places which share similarities with Leamington. Although there is some work analyzing the impact of neoliberal globalization on communities (see, for example Ramp and Koc (2001) who examine a community's resistance to global investment in the rural West of Canada), there is a blank spot with regards to the responses to this phenomenon on the part of communities. As I have demonstrated, Leamington is a prime example for the study of such processes because of the shift in the makeup of the economic base. Leamington's changing relationship with globalization has involved a shift from the global to the local, that is the global player (Heinz) is receding into the background and the smaller local players (economic and municipal entities) are surfacing as the newly imagined faces of globalization.

This research contributes to the understanding of shifting assemblages in an era of neoliberal globalization and offers a glimpse into the creative responses of communities. The art of making assemblages is an ongoing process. Assemblages are

constantly being rearranged. Answering the question of whether or not this is a 'successful' rearrangement is not my objective - and, in any case, how to define and measure success is highly debatable. For example, although new jobs have been created, the vast majority are just above minimum wage in the retail industry (most notably WalMart, Rona, Canadian Tire, and so forth). Leamington also has to deal with the same consequences other community face: Changes in migration patterns and the rise of xenophobia; the loss of traditional ways to arrange everyday-life, especially the disappearance of small family operated shops; and the spread of multinational box store chains, essentially homogenizing global consumption patterns. The latter also entails common visible changes, especially the desolation of down-town areas.

The main findings of this study can be summarized in a brief manner. This research suggests that, first, perceived *traditional* forces of globalization, such as *multinational corporations*, are not necessarily determining community affairs at this time. In fact, in the case of Leamington, this global player, Heinz, has been gradually retreating from running community affairs. Second, communities do exhibit a remarkable degree of resilience and ingenuity to exploit niches in a globalizing economy. And, third, in doing so, community actors play an important role in creating, shifting and adapting assemblages. I suggest that future research take these points up and continue to document the shift in assemblages, and in these new modes of governance, where communities are grappling with the contradictory processes of neoliberal globalization.

Appendix A

1. Adam, male, around 40 years of age. Municipality of Leamington.
2. Clair, female, around 55 years of age. Chapter of Commerce, Municipality of Leamington.
3. George, male, around 40 years of age. Expert on the history of the area.
4. James, male, around 60 to 65 years of age. Retired engineer and overseas manager at Heinz.
5. Liz, female, around 60 years of age. Downtown sales volunteer.
6. Mary, female, around 40 to 45 years of age. Member of the Economic Development Office of the Municipality of Leamington.
7. Mike, male, around 45 to 50 years of age. Memorabilia collector.
8. Olga, female, around 35 years of age. UFCW local 459.
9. Peter, male, around 50 years of age. Elected official, Municipality of Leamington.
10. Selma, female, around 55 years of age. Downtown shopkeeper.

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VITA AUCTORIS

Karina Schneider was born in 1969 in Wilster, Germany. She graduated from the Beruflichen Schulen des Kreises Steinburg, economics branch, in 1991. From there she went to the Christian Albrechts University Kiel, Germany, and studied Archeology. After immigrating to Canada, she went to the University of Windsor where she obtained a BA in Anthropology in 2004. She is currently a candidate for the Master's degree in Sociology at the University of Windsor and hopes to graduate in Spring 2009.